



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Common Core District Leads Participating in the Practice Assessment
FROM: Dr. Dianna Roberge-Wentzell, Chief Academic Officer
RE: Follow-up from the March 13, 2013 Conference Call
DATE: March 25, 2013

District leaders who were able to join the March 13, 2013 conference call were notified that follow-up information would be provided to districts participating in the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) Common Core aligned "Practice Assessment." This memo includes more detailed information regarding what and how students will be assessed. Additional information will be provided in the coming weeks to support district administration of the practice assessment. Should you have any questions please contact Emily Byrne via email at emily.byrne@ct.gov or via telephone at 860-713-6546.

Overview of the Practice Assessment Items

English Language Arts: The CSDE has developed a practice assessment in both reading and writing that is aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The items were developed to simulate the Smarter Balanced assessments. The practice assessment differs from the current CMT and CAPT in several ways, ranging from the rigor of the stimuli to the format of the items:

- All stimuli on both the reading and writing practice assessment follow the CCSS guidelines for grade appropriate complex text, which means stimuli may be more difficult than those on the CMT and CAPT;
- The practice assessment puts an emphasis on informational text, as outlined in the CCSS—the reading portion of the practice assessment consists of three (3) stimuli: one (1) literary and two (2) informational passages; and
- The writing portion of the practice assessment moves the focus to one (1) mode of writing per grade, with the expectation that all students in all grades will write narrative, informational/explanatory, and opinion/argumentative responses based on grade appropriate complex sources.

Students will now need to identify proper conventions, where the CMT and CAPT have not required this, within the multiple choice and open-ended items in the practice assessment. They will also have to demonstrate the proper use of conventions in their extended writing tasks. However, the most significant difference between the CMT and CAPT versus the practice assessment is the variation of item types. The practice assessment includes:

- Traditional multiple choice items;
- Multiple choice items that have more than the typical four distractors;
- Multiple choice items that contain multiple correct responses; and
- Two part multiple choice questions in which a student must determine the correct response to both questions.

The practice assessment also includes basic constructed response items as well as a two new type of writing items: the brief write and the full-write. Students are directed to write a multi-paragraph response to a question in a specific mode of writing. Lastly, the writing practice assessments include a full-write component consisting of multiple sources that students must read and then incorporate into their multi-paragraph response.

Mathematics: Most current statewide assessments, including CMT and CAPT were developed using a traditional approach, where a sample of the standards are selected to measure a sub-set of the content standards. The CCSS for mathematics demands a different approach for instruction and assessment to preserve the focus, coherence and rigor of the Mathematics standards. The items developed for the practice assessment were developed using a model similar to that being used by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. The practice assessment items are associated with one of three categories:

- Concepts and Procedures
- Problem Solving and
- Communicating Reasoning

Smarter Balanced refers to these categories as Claims. A Claim is a statement about what a student knows or is able to do. For example, for Concepts and Procedures, “students can explain and apply mathematical concepts and interpret and carry out mathematical procedures with precision and fluency.” Assessment targets were then written to define the specific knowledge, skill, or ability that students should be able to demonstrate within each content domain.

For the practice assessment, the items are drawn from the targets identified as the major work of each grade, including developing students’ habits of mind with the mathematical practices. The major work of each grade is outlined in the Smarter Balanced Mathematics Content Specifications (<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Math-Content-Specifications.pdf>). For example, in grade 7, the major work of the grade includes:

- Analyze proportional relationships and use them to solve real-world and mathematical problems;
- Solve real-life and mathematical problems using numerical and algebraic expressions and equation;
- Apply and extend previous understandings of operations with fractions to add, subtract, multiply and divide rational numbers; and
- Use properties of operations to generate equivalent expressions.

Like the Smarter Balanced items, the practice assessment items are written to elicit evidence that can be used to support or refute a claim about the student’s achievement of the assessment target.

Grade-level Form Assignments

Though the practice assessment does not include computer adaptability and technologically enhanced items, in many ways it mirrors what students will see in the next generation of English language arts and mathematics assessments. Below is a chart that indicates which forms will be provided to which grades:

Reading and Math	Writing and Math
Grade 3 (60 minutes for Reading and Math)	Grade 6 (60 minutes for Math and 90 minutes for Writing)
Grade 4 (60 minutes for Reading and Math)	Grade 7 (60 minutes for Math and 90 minutes for Writing)
Grade 5 (60 minutes for Reading and Math)	Grade 8 (60 minutes for Math and 90 minutes for Writing)
	Grade 11 (90 minutes for Math and Writing)

Students will be randomly assigned to either a math or reading form in grades 3-5 and either a math or writing form in grade 11. Districts and schools will determine which form of either math or writing students will take in grades 6-8. More information on administration guidance is forthcoming.